

Togo experienced a political impasse in 2014 over a number of proposed reforms in the lead-up to the 2015 presidential election. Negotiations over changes to the constitution and to the electoral framework failed; disagreement between opposition parties and President Faure Gnassingbé's Union for the Republic (UNIR) party led to inaction on contested points, including the lack of presidential term limits.

Opposition groups, including the Rainbow Coalition and the Save Togo Collective (CST), had decreased sway with the public due to their poor performance in the 2013 legislative elections. In contrast, recent economic improvements contributed to the expansion of President Gnassingbé's popularity beyond his traditional base of support in the North. In October 2014, Gnassingbé formally announced his candidacy for the 2015 presidential election.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 18 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 5 / 12

The president is elected to a five-year term and appoints the prime minister. In 2010, Gnassingbé won reelection with more than 60 percent of the vote amid numerous irregularities, including vote buying and partisanship within the electoral commission. The problems were not considered serious enough to have influenced the outcome of the vote, however. The 91 members of the unicameral National Assembly are elected to five-year terms. In 2013, after much delay, legislative elections were held and considered to be credible and transparent by international observers, though the opposition disputed the results. UNIR won 62 National Assembly seats and 23 of the country's 28 electoral zones, including some opposition strongholds. The opposition CST won 19 seats, the Rainbow Coalition won 6 seats, the Union of Forces for Change (UFC) won 3, and an independent candidate won a seat.

A number of proposed electoral reforms—including changing politically tailored electoral district allocations, instituting a presidential term limit, and increasing the independence of the Constitutional Court—were the focus of negotiations between political parties in the first half of 2014. In June, the National Assembly rejected a bill containing these reforms. Despite opposition protests, Gnassingbé in October announced his intention to run for reelection in 2015.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 8 / 16

Although opposition parties are free to operate, the structure of the electoral system, including districting and the single round of elections, help Gnassingbé and his party remain in power. Internal divisions, as well as district allocations dramatically favoring UNIR, are sources of weakness for the opposition. Gnassingbé's family has ruled the country for nearly 50 years, and the government is dominated by his Kabyé ethnic group, who also comprise the vast majority of the security services. The Éwé, Togo's largest ethnic group, are persistently excluded from positions of influence; they are prominent within the opposition.

C. Functioning of Government: 5 / 12

The National Assembly was freely elected in 2013 and has influence over policy, but corruption remains a serious problem. Reforms under President Gnassingbé empowered the National Assembly to appoint the members of the Anticorruption Commission (CAC), but the body has been slow to make progress and appears to be aligned with the president and UNIR. In November 2014, the government released a draft bill for a new body, the High Authority to Prevent and Fight Corruption and Related Offenses, to be created under the auspices of the CAC. The government has described its role as preventive, rather than punitive, and voiced intentions to use the body to promote a culture of transparency; it had not been formed at year's end. Togo was ranked 126 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Civil Liberties: 29 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 9 / 16

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by law but often disregarded in practice. Impunity for crimes against journalists and frequent defamation suits encourage self-censorship, though the availability of diverse and critical voices in the media has increased in recent years. The only report of violence against the media in 2014 occurred in May, when the editor of the weekly *L'Oeil d'Afrique* was attacked at his home. The attackers had not been apprehended by year's end. Private print and broadcast outlets have low capacity and are often politicized, and journalists are often corruptible due to low pay.

The High Authority of Broadcasting and Communications (HAAC) is widely believed to be a close ally of the Gnassingbé administration and has been known to penalize critical journalism. The HAAC can impose severe penalties—including the suspension of publications or broadcasts and the confiscation of press cards—if journalists are found to have made “serious errors” or are “endangering national security.” There were few reports of the body intimidating journalists in 2014. In September, the HAAC attempted to prevent a prominent journalist from launching a news portal, *afrikaexpress.info*, ostensibly for noncompliance with requirements for establishing the website, despite the absence of any laws governing online news outlets in Togo. The HAAC ceased its attempts after pushback from the founder, allowing the website to launch. Access to the internet is otherwise generally unrestricted, though penetration is low.

Religious freedom is constitutionally protected and generally respected. Islam and Christianity are recognized as official religions; other religious groups must register as associations.

Government security forces are believed to maintain a presence on university campuses and have cracked down on student protests in the past. In January 2014, nine students were expelled in connection with their participation in demonstrations in 2013, and their school's administrators requested the presence of security forces on campus to discourage unrest. While political discussion is prohibited on religious radio and television stations, citizens are increasingly able to speak openly.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 6 / 12

Freedom of assembly is sometimes restricted. A 2011 law requires that demonstrations receive prior authorization and only be held during certain times of the day. The opposition held rallies throughout 2014,

largely focusing on electoral reform, though these gatherings received less public support than those in previous years. In November, police used tear gas to disperse protesters who defied a government order not to approach the National Assembly building.

Freedom of association is largely respected, and human rights organizations generally operate without government interference. Togo's constitution guarantees the right to form and join labor unions. In December, the labor union representing health, education, and administrative workers went on strike demanding better pay. The government did not interfere with the strikers.

F. Rule of Law: 7 / 16

The judicial system lacks resources and is heavily influenced by the presidency. In September 2014, Gnassingbé reappointed the president of the Constitutional Court, who is a frequent target of opposition criticism because of his alleged ties to the president. Lengthy pretrial detention is a serious problem. Prisons suffer from overcrowding and inadequate food and medical care. Prison conditions began to receive national public attention after the 2013 death of Etienne Kodjo Yakanou, an opposition activist arrested in connection with market fires that took place that year. The official statement was that he died of malaria, but the opposition has accused prison authorities of withholding medical care.

In June 2014, the government published a response to the 2012 recommendations of the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated political violence and human rights violations that occurred in Togo between 1958 and 2005. The government detailed its plan to implement the recommendations, which include compensation for victims, the abolition of the death penalty, measures for the prevention of torture, and various judicial reforms. Working with the Ministry of Human Rights, a civil society group subsequently held events to help government employees understand the implementation process.

The north and south of the country have historically been divided along political and ethnic lines. Discrimination among the country's 40 ethnic groups occurs but was not widely reported in 2014. Same-sex sexual activity is punishable by fines and up to three years in prison.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 7 / 16

Travel within Togo can be constrained by checkpoints, where security personnel are reported to cause arbitrary delays and demand bribes. While the majority of Togo's economy is focused on agriculture, employing more than 60 percent of the population, the country is increasingly seen as a Western-friendly investment environment and has moved to privatize a number of industries, including the telecommunications and banking sectors. Demand for the use of the port in the capital, Lomé, has notably increased in recent years.

A 2013 amendment to the Electoral Code requires that women have equal representation on party lists. The Law on Political Party and Electoral Campaign Funding, passed after the 2013 legislative elections, requires that a portion of a party's public financing be determined in proportion to the number of women from that party elected in the most recent national and local elections. Of the 91 seats in the National Assembly, 16 are currently held by women. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, women's opportunities for education and employment are limited. Customary law discriminates against women in divorce and inheritance, and children can only inherit citizenship from their father. Spousal abuse is

widespread, and spousal rape is not a crime. Child trafficking for the purpose of slavery remains a serious problem, and prosecutions under a 2005 child-trafficking law are rare.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)